

IN the theatre, at any rate, the New Year has begun splendidly with "At the Drop of a Hat"—a two-man show, devised for private consumption, which has cleared the footlights of the New Lindsey Theatre with the leap of a runaway chamol.

Michael Flanders and Donald Swann (words and music respectively) began their collaboration when they were at Westminster together.

They make a genial, polished and unaffectedly eccentric



MICHAEL FLANDERS

team—"like Falstaff," someone said, "singing duets with Hamlet"—and their material is blessedly unsnart, good-tempered and as witty in music as in words.

I back "At the Drop of a Hat" to see the summer through.

### A Good Choice

WEDNESBURY has done well. I fancy, in choosing Mr. Peter Tapsell as its Conservative candidate in the by-election caused by the resignation of Mr. Stanley Evans.

Mr. Tapsell was a member of

# PEOPLE & THINGS: By ATTICUS

the Prime Minister's personal staff during the General Election of 1955; and during the previous year, when he toured the U.S.A. as one of the Oxford Union's debating team, he received from the then President of the U.S. Forensic Association one of the handsomest compliments ever paid to such a visitor. "Tapsell," the President wrote, "will likely become one of the legendary British debaters against whom we shall measure others in the future."

With a Labour majority of nearly 9,000 to cut away at, he'll have plenty of scope.

### Best-Sellers of 1956

HAVING learned what some of the best people thought were the best books of 1956, it occurred to me to inquire what actually sold best.

I did not go to one of the larger bookshops who "shift" books by the thousand every day, but to one of the few remaining "bespoke" booksellers left in London. This is what he said:

"Last year's best-sellers I know exactly because I am still selling them. For instance, at Christmas, we sold most of 'The Nude,' by Sir Kenneth Clark (Murray), 'The Bourbons of Naples,' by Harold Acton (Methuen), and 'Venice Observed,' by Mary McCarthy (Zwemmer). If we had been clever enough to order more, or if Evans had printed a larger edition, 'Memories of Six Reigns,' by the late Princess Marie Louise, would have led the field.

### The Story-Tellers

"By far our best-selling novels in the whole of 1956 were 'Anglo-Saxon Attitudes,' by Angus Wilson (Secker & Warburg) and 'The Towers of

Trebizonde,' by Rose Macaulay (Collins).

"Then came 'A Legacy,' by Sybil Bedford (Weidenfeld & Nicolson), tipped by Evelyn Waugh (alas, 'no discharge from the Waugh' this year!), 'Morning,' by Julian Fane (Murray), which we went nap on before publication, and 'Thin Ice,' by Sir Compton Mackenzie (Chatto & Windus). 'The Nightcomers,' by Eric Ambler (Heinemann) led the thrillers."

In non-fiction the second

volume of Sir Winston Churchill's "History of the English-Speaking Peoples" (Cassell) was a clear winner, with "Noblesse Oblige" (Miford and others) (Hamish Hamilton) an impertinent second, and Alan Moorehead's "Gallipoli" (Hamilton again) well up.

### Don't Look Now, But . . .

PERSECUTION-MANIACS will come away white-haired from the "Open Skies

for Peace" exhibition which opens at the Royal Exchange on Tuesday.

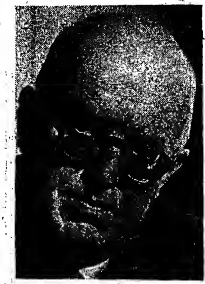
The general theme of the display, which has been arranged by the U.S. Government, is "Aerial Inspection," which is fundamental to President Eisenhower's proposal for free mutual inspection from the sky in East and West alike.

Just how far such reconnaissance can now go is clear from the photographs on view: a strip 490 miles wide and 2,700

miles long can be photographed in four hours. At 600 miles an hour and 2,000 feet above the ground the cameras pick up the just and the unjust, the felon and the ping-pong player with equal ease. Strategist, politician and topographer will find much to enthrall them.

### Dis-Doctored Knight

NO one has a more delicate eye for a prefix than Mr. C. P. Snow, a knighthood for whom was announced in the New Year honours list, and



C. P. SNOW

few men, perhaps, so well deserve the style of "Doctor"; so that when he forswore this, a few years ago, it seemed to his friends to indicate that the novelist in him was getting the upper hand of the administrator, the teacher, and the practical man of science.

In looks a backroom Socrates, Mr. Snow has a lively and unportentous awareness of his position as the only Englishman who now trends with equal success in these four fields. A Cambridge man (he can't ever spell Mark Pattison) his sympathies lie none the less with Redbrick and the natural sciences.

"Not to have a glimmer of the Second Law of Thermodynamics," says Snow, "is not to be educated." If the arts and the scientist are to be brought nearer together, he is one of the men who can do it.

### People and Words

"When it comes to fighting imperialists we are all Stalinists," —MR. KRAUSCHKEVICH.

"Britain is not, never has been and, please God, never will be a second-class Power. And I am going to tell the Americans so." —NANCY, VISCONTRESS ASTOR.

"It used to be said that trade followed the flag, now it follows the technologist." —SIR ALEXANDER TODD.

"Bonts are the best things it life." —VISCONT HAILSHAM.

"A television set will enter Manchester Grammar School, over its dead body." —SIR ERIC JAMES, High Master.